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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

5/15/79

Argentina
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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Request for Funds from Permanent Assembly

DATE: May 15, 1979

PARTICIPANTS: Rabbi Roberto Graetz, Permanent Assembly
of Human Rights
Rabbi Morton Rosenthal, Anti-Defamation
League, B'nai B'rith
Jontahan Silverstone, AID
Patrick Flood, HA/HR
Roberta Cohen, HA/HR

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/R/S/PS
Margaret P. Griefeld, Director
(X) Release () Excise () Deny
Exemptions(s):
Classify: () In Part (X) In Full Declassify on
() Classify as () Extend as () Downgrade to
Date Declassify on Reason

Description of Permanent Assembly

Rabbi Graetz reported that the Assembly is a broad based movement composed of the families of disappeared and detained people, representatives of Catholic, Protestant and Jewish religious groups (in official and unofficial capacity), unions (with more joining), and concerned citizens.

Its functions are as follows:

-- The Assembly is the focal point for information about disappearances. Families report disappearances to the Assembly and receive information, legal advice and counseling. The Assembly has a committee which focuses and reports on women who disappear while pregnant, as well as the children of those who disappear,¹ and soldiers who disappear. The Assembly places ads about disappearances in local newspapers. (One with 2,500 names was placed in La Prensa.)

-- The Assembly engages in direct representations to the leadership of the Argentine military government regarding human rights.

1/ Rabbi Graetz reported that the children of those who disappear are sometimes illegally adopted or in other instances given to officers, sent to orphan homes or given to relatives. Pregnant women in jail now can keep their babies for 6 months at which time the children are given to relatives for safe keeping.

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-2-

-- The Assembly has a Lawyers Committee which has put forward several significant class action law suits dealing with the legal status of both disappeared and detainees (PEN prisoners). The suits have succeeded in getting the Supreme Court to request the Executive Branch for information about disappeared cases.

-- The Assembly maintains contact on an informal basis with the Inter-American Human Rights Commission, Amnesty International, and other international organizations.

-- The Assembly assists visitors from abroad looking into the human rights situation.

Organizationally, the Assembly has an office and a growing staff. There is one Executive Secretary and four assistants.

Request for Funds

The Assembly's funds come from the World Council of Churches, the Catholic Churches in Europe and from individuals in Argentina. Its budget is \$400,000.

Funds are needed for future programs. The Assembly will concentrate on cases of disappearances, prison conditions, persons detained without trials, migrants, health and education given the growing problem of illiteracy and public school drop-outs, as well as additional law suits and reports.

Funds also will be needed to pay for printing and distribution costs and to place costly ads in newspapers on disappeared cases. Since the Assembly receives no news coverage in Argentina, it must place paid ads in newspapers. The Assembly further had to buy its own printing press because others would not print its materials.

The Assembly also seeks to open regional offices in order to enlarge the collection of information on human rights cases in the interior.

Jonathan Silverstone suggested that AID 116e funds might be channeled to the Permanent Assembly through the Center for Law and Social Policy. The funds could be used for legal defense, counseling, assistance to families, publications and other ways to promote civil and political

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-3-

liberties. Pat Flood said he would contact Leonard Meeker to discuss the possibility and then inform Tex at the Embassy who would in turn contact Rabbi Graetz and others at the Assembly. In the event that Mr. Pimenthal of the Assembly visited Washington at the end of May, Pat would set up a meeting for him with Leonard Meeker to discuss this proposal.

HA/HR:RCohen 5/29/79

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